

# Vaginal Discharge

Arizona Department of Corrections  
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program  
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Each woman has her own pattern of vaginal fluids. It will help you stay healthy if you learn your own normal pattern.

## **What are normal vaginal fluids like?**

They are either thick and whitish or slippery and clear. It depends on where you are in your menstrual cycle. There is little odor and no itching or burning. Regular bathing will keep the fluids from getting stale or uncomfortable.

How much fluid you produce depends on the hormones that guide your menstrual cycle. Usually there is more fluid:

- just before you ovulate.
- when you are pregnant.
- when you are sexually excited.
- You will have less fluid just before your period.

## **Why are vaginal fluids necessary?**

The vagina produces fluid to keep the genital area healthy. These fluids wash the vagina clean, and also help in the fight against infection.

## **What are abnormal vaginal fluids like?**

Watch for:

- changes in color, amount, or texture of the fluid.
- unpleasant odors.
- bleeding, spotting, or bloody discoloration.
- itching and/or burning of the vagina area.

## **What causes abnormal vaginal discharges?**

Abnormal vaginal discharges can be caused by irritation of the genital area or infection. Ways to prevent irritation or infection include:

- Keep the genital area as dry as possible.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Avoid wearing clothes or underwear that are too tight.
- Wash your genital area (vulva) regularly with mild soap and water.
- Rinse well and dry thoroughly after washing.
- Don't share towels.
- Let towels dry thoroughly between uses.
- Always wipe front to back after using the bathroom.

## **Should I see a health care provider or fill out an HNR?**

You should fill out an HNR if abnormal odor, irritation, bleeding, or pain is connected with your vaginal discharge.

Try to not schedule your visit during your period. However, don't put off going because you have abnormal bleeding. That might mean you have a serious problem.